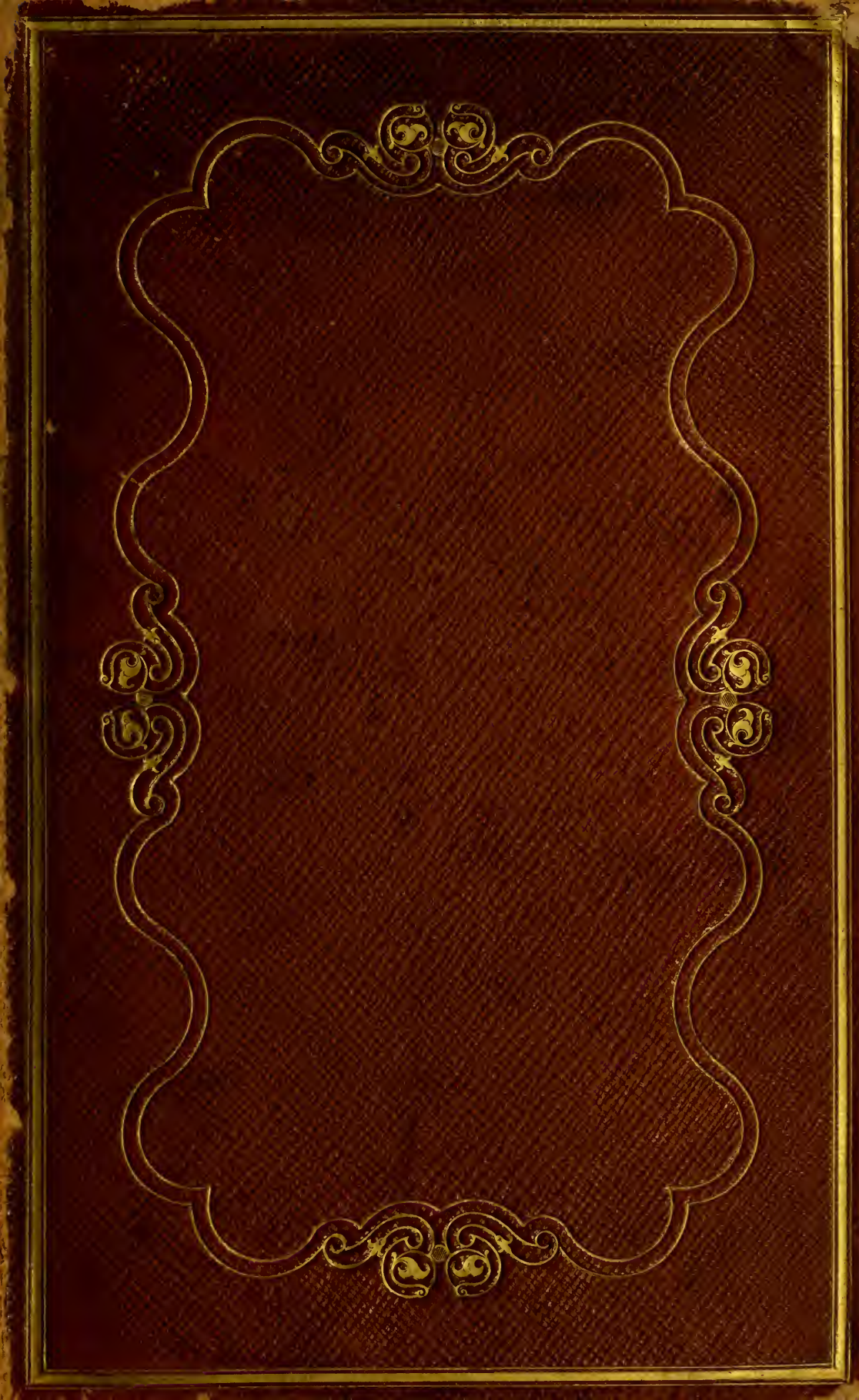




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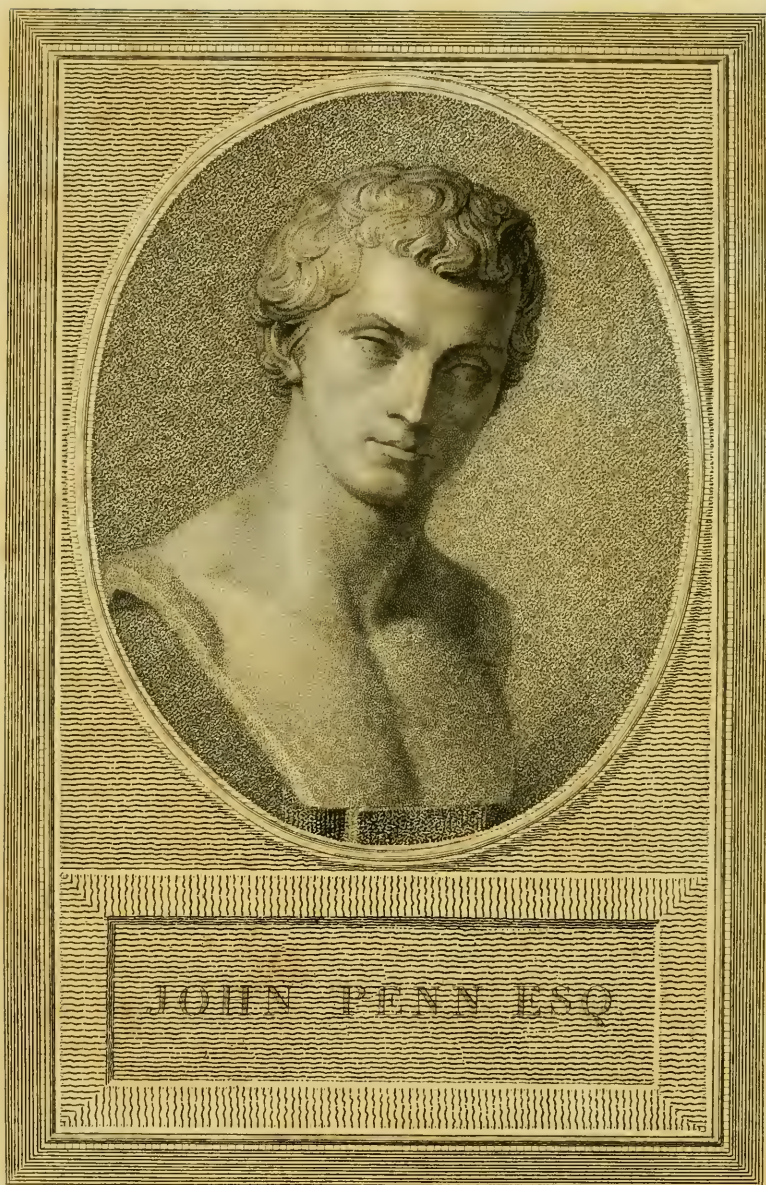
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THE
BATTLE OF EDDINGTON;
OR,
BRITISH LIBERTY.



Drawn by A. Tondt from the original bust by Deare

Engraved by L. Schiavonetti

Published March 1 1761. by J. Blatchard 17.3 Broadly

THE
BATTLE OF EDDINGTON;
OR,
BRITISH LIBERTY.

A TRAGEDY.

By JOHN PENN, Esq. D. C. L.
GOVERNOR OF PORTLAND,
&c. &c.

SECOND EDITION.

DEDICATED (BY PERMISSION)
TO
LORD ASHLEY,
ELECTED M. P. FOR THE COUNTY OF DORSET,
IN THE YEAR 1831.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR ROBERT FENN, CHARING-CROSS;
BY W. NICOL, CLEVELAND-ROW, ST. JAMES'S.

1832.

DEDICATION
OF
THE SECOND EDITION
TO
LORD ASHLEY.

CHOSEN M. P. FOR THE COUNTY OF DORSET,
1831.

MY LORD, Pennsylvania Castle, Portland,
November 5th, 1831.

WHEN I first had the honour of meeting Your Lordship in the town of Dorchester, on the eve of your glorious triumph at the late Election for the County, engaged in presiding at the Committee of that eminent Scholar, and conscientious Senator, Mr. Bankes, or when I chanced to be near you on the stairs of the Hustings in its vicinity, I could not help being forcibly reminded of the first year of the reign of Charles the Second, when your

ancestor, that great Chancellor of England, destined to be the first Earl of Shaftesbury,* was the colleague of my great grandfather Admiral Sir William Penn, after his hard earned victories over the most renowned champions of the Netherlands, when chosen to represent the adjoining town of Weymouth, or Melcomb Regis. I was struck, also, at the resemblance between the honours by which the town of Weymouth had heard some time you had been distinguished at Oxford, and the reputation which the old, though rejected, Member of the County had received in the rival University of Cambridge, at Trinity Hall, when I was studying also at Alma Mater, in the closely adjoining College of Clare Hall. This promise of a true constitutional spirit had its effect in inspiring the desire, in seeing which accomplished I have been since gratified.

The love of learned excellence, which is equivalent in many of its effects to a constant felicity

* A town of Dorsetshire (originally a city) built by Alfred, A. D. 881.

in the execution of plans, has led me gradually into some of those classical habits long respected by Universities ; and I have, during the late rejoicings at our success in political undertakings, furnished to the Theatre, an attempt to contribute to the amusement of the neighbouring watering-place of Weymouth, through the medium of a company of Actors, by a novel construction of a tragic Drama, as meant, in a certain degree, to exhibit some advantages yet unattained, though requiring the penetration that we know from the famous Locke to have distinguished your celebrated Ancestor above mentioned, or his more literary Grandson, properly to appreciate. The object was, to banish from the Tragic Drama, whatever could oppose its genuine end, yet to be *scrupulously tenacious* of every imaginable perfection or improvement in the plan, in spite of what I judged the erroneous *liberality* of modern criticism. To you, My Lord, who promise to unite the successful efforts of both your distinguished ancestors, I would naturally appeal, to find whether, because we all allow with the

German Dramatic School, that Shakspeare's liberty produces beauties, for which that liberty is easily pardonable, the reasoning of a Locke would infer that, if those advantages are not missed which that want of liberty tends to circumscribe, and it is only on that *severe* condition (*as in attracting, not a CIRCLE OF STUDENTS, but a MIXED audience* by a correct representation of a fable, upon the stage,) that an Author would make any claim, he merits the dispraise of exemplifying a failure, either by the rooted prejudice of Managers, in too systematically rejecting our offers of dramas, or other errors of judgment. As to the French Tragic Drama, we know the blame of meagreness imputed to it, and yet seem not to infer, that filling it out with correct action proportionate to, and taking place of, superabundant declamation, must command the supply of that deficiency of matter of which we complain. This mistake has driven the French, and even Voltaire, (who professes to improve French literature upon the English plan) to advocate the positive rules at which the English and Germans are

so much offended. If they had been content to consider the Unities and other approaches to perfection as the mere *full dress* of Tragedy, though plain and simple, and though less essential than the far higher excellencies of Shakspeare;—in fine, as that costume for *court dress*, when

. gorgeous Tragedy,
In sceptr'd pall comes sweeping by;
Presenting Thebes or Pelops line,
Or the tale of Troy divine——

MILTON, *Il Penseroso*.

they would not then stand a chance of praise from all the admirers of nature, in observing these minuter rules of taste. But the ancient *Dandyism* of illiberal, strait-laced French criticism has long irritated all those determined, as Pope argues of the English,

“To keep unconquered and uncivilized.”

Essay on Criticism, v. 715.

This full dress to be worn, however thus plain and simple, only on particular occasions, is easily conceived natural, and might make a tolerated variety, like the morocco binding of a very favourite

book, or like Alexander the Great's copy of Homer, kept by him, as a precious possession *in perfume* ; in short, as something of value enough to seem to you, whatever its kind,

“ Posse linenda cedro, et levi servanda cupresso.”

Hor. *Ars Poet.* l. 332.

This offering was certainly, as meant to be a first attempt to unite those dissimilar advantages, presented, when first written (as its first Dedication testifies), to a great Minister, whom in your strong adherence to British political Institutions, you certainly may be said to resemble ; THE RIGHT HONOURABLE WILLIAM PITT ; a minister to whom, my worthy cotemporaries at Cambridge are doing the same honour of naming a Press after *him*, as you Oxonians have done to *Clarendon* ; one, whom Mr. Bankes's farewell speech to his constituents, proves, acted and spoke always in the true spirit of a sincere REFORMER, in the best sense of that word ; such, as it is to be hoped, can adapt any change wisely to the unalterable nature of human affairs, in the New Bill that is under consideration. While the

opinions are hazarded in this Introductory Letter on the nature of this dignified province of the Drama, it should be always recollected, that in a case where the appeal is made to a mind enlightened by academical education, it is rather to be considered as a consultation to benefit from a knowledge of its sentiments, than a vain narrative to convey instruction by our own communications.

I have the honour to be, with the utmost respect
and esteem,

MY LORD,

your very faithful and obedient humble Servant,

JOHN PENN,

GOVERNOR OF PORTLAND;

Appointed by George III. A. D. 1805.

P. S. I have adopted the unusual mode, in this edition, of numbering the lines in the exact manner of the ancient Greek tragedians, which perhaps, I may flatter myself, will not displease

Your Lordship from associations, which I have also felt, derived from juvenile perusals of Æschylus, Euripides and Sophocles ; but, having seen, in the recollections furnished by Captain M-dw-n, of that celebrated poet, Lord Byron, that he spoke of the length of those ancient plays, as I have done, as measurable in this manner, and thought it should confirm me in my idea (which I concluded was, perhaps, his) that it might be made thus a convenient test of the proportion of plays, I conceived of some *real* use to the poet, I have not scrupled to adopt it in the drama, though only perhaps countenanced by the Sampson Agonistes, in the English language ; and no where, I believe, in the French or Italian.

So good a judge of poetry as Lord Byron may be heard on this subject, so far as to speculate a little on the means of protecting “ English Bards” from “ Scotch Reviewers,” should it be found that either silence or misrepresentation has unduly kept the Public ignorant, from want of the critic’s own knowledge of his duties (so correctly every where

enumerated in Pope's Essay on Criticism), in the information expected from him ; and the reasoning of Lord Byron on this very subject of the Unities, having tended to raise some doubt, whether the ancient Greek Drama, as imitated, may not fairly compete with the modern German Drama, and possess at least divided honours with it, now there is a prospect of fashionable encouragement being accorded to the latter ; it may fortunately, also, happen, that this moral lesson should be taught no less by that monument of matchless wisdom, the BRITISH CONSTITUTION, and its brilliant union of THEORY and PRACTICE be intimately thus established, in the triumph of TRUTH over FALSEHOOD.

DEDICATION OF THE FIRST EDITION

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

WILLIAM PITT.

1796.

SIR,

I ventured to dedicate to you the first edition of the *Battle of Eddington*, recommended only by the sincerity of my respect for you, as the champion of law and order. I less scruple to dedicate to you a second altered edition, which derives some real value from the applause of a British audience: for you have not ceased, ever since, to deserve equally the gratitude and admiration of all, by maintaining the unequal contest with your adversaries, though not, on your part, rendered even partially invulnerable by any sprinkling of execrable popularity.

Posterity, Sir, will do you the justice to remark, that had danger, at the present period, been

apprehended from the crown, the country would have found, in history, consoling proofs of its ability to cope with monarchs; but that as it was to be looked for in the metaphysical spirit growing among the people, it stood in a new and alarming predicament, and imposed on you a task of the most arduous kind. They will take notice, that the same nation, in the last and present centuries, has forced the rest of Europe to unite for the preservation of its independence, and that it has at both periods manifested an equal contempt of the balance of power. If I speak as one prejudiced, beyond others, against its politics, the reason must be sought in my situation. It may not be deemed wonderful that the grandson, and representative, in the elder branch, of the founder of Pennsylvania, should think that a secondary mode of law-giving, which supposes necessary the destruction of antecedent systems of government.

It has been, of late, a matter of literary discussion, who is, or is not, the proper object of a dedication. I do not know whether a minister has

been specifically allowed such, in case the dedicator prefers receiving no future benefit at his hands. If he is, I shall be happy that, in the present instance, a tribute has been offered, not unworthy of him.

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient

And most humble Servant,

JOHN PENN.

Spring-Gardens,
April 6, 1796.

ARGUMENT.

IRELAND was very early, by the successful exertions of St. Patrick, converted to Christianity; the early progress of which also in England, had perhaps tended to create an intercourse of the most friendly sort, between the countries; for venerable Bede informs us, that, towards the end of the seventh century, Egfrid, king of Northumberland, wantonly invaded Ireland, “an harmless nation,” he says, “and always particularly friendly to the English.” In the year 853, the Danes established themselves by force in that country, and, in the course of their wars with the inhabitants, were gradually converted to Christianity, without becoming less hostile. At the accession of Alfred, in 871, they had nearly possessed themselves of this island. He succeeded his brother in the twenty-second year of his age,

having married the sister of Buthred, tributary king of Mercia, the beautiful and accomplished Elsitha, who supported with him the various hardships he was for some years destined to endure ; and his eldest son was named Edmund, who inherited some of his father's talents, but died before him. In their retreat among the marshes at Athelney in Somersetshire, (which has occasioned a comparison between his situation and that of Marius) Alfred witnessed the daily progress of the Danes, who obliged Buthred to fly to Rome, and who found in Ceoluph, called in the Saxon Chronicle " a certain thane," and one of Buthred's household, a person friendly enough to their views, to make them place him upon the vacant throne. During the time he was in favour with the Danes, and consequently in power, it appeared to be his whole object to enrich himself by extortion. Ethelred, a warrior eminent for virtues and talents, assisted Alfred in his warlike enterprizes, and probably during his distresses ; for not long after them, he was made governor of London. He received

also in marriage, his daughter Elflæda (called the English Zenobia), together with the earldom of Mercia.

While Alfred sallied occasionally from his retreat, with little hopes but to support himself and his followers, or take some revenge upon his enemies, he heard that Oddune, Earl of Devonshire, had defeated an army of the Danes, from Ireland and other parts, who attempted to land near Appledore in that county, and had taken from them the famous standard, which they thought was enchanted, and promised them success in war. Their leader, Hubba, fell, and after burying him in a solemn manner, they betook themselves to their ships. On this event the prospects of Alfred began to brighten.

———— *pulcher fugatis*

Ille dies Latio tenebris

Qui primus almæ risit adored,

Dirus per urbes Afer ut Italas,

Ceu flamma per tædas, vel Euris

Per Siculas equitavit undas.

When first glad conquest smil'd with golden gleam,
And chas'd the dreary night, since Latium's foe,
Dire Africk's chief, laid waste her reign,
Fierce as the blazing torches glow,
Wild as the storm that sweeps Sicilia's main.

Boscawen.

He immediately went, disguised as a harper, to the Danish camp at Eddington, in Wiltshire, and by his wit and skill in music, made himself so welcome to the Danes, that he had means of forming an exact judgment of the strength of the camp; which their dissolute and careless manner of life rendered more easily assailable. He then privately summoned those who remained attached to him from all parts; and a general meeting took place at Selwood forest, on the spot where "Alfred's Tower" was erected in honour of that event, by the family of Sir Richard Hoare, the present possessor of the estate. From hence the army marched, without halting, to Eddington; and though for a long time resisted by the Danes, with determined courage, it prevailed at length, and the scattered remnant of

the enemy fled to a neighbouring castle, and soon after capitulated, in the year 880. Alfred gave the Danes their liberty, and granted to those, who embraced the Christian religion, a large tract of land in the northern parts of England. The princes of South Wales had already done homage to Alfred, for their principalities, and Anarawd, their elder brother, and prince of North Wales, now followed their example. Some accounts represent Scotland likewise, where Gregory the Great then reigned, as courting the advantage of a similar union with this country. Having thus established and extended his power in the prime of life, and being in the highest degree, possessed of every great and good quality, he was enabled more effectually to labour in the great work of laying the foundations of the English government, before his death took place, A. D. 900.

The above facts are true, according to the most credible accounts ; but the texture of the fable, and other incidents, are wholly imaginary.

— What the lofty grave tragedians taught,
 In CHORUS or IAMBIC; teachers best
 Of moral prudence, with delight received
 In brief sententious precepts, while they treat
 Of fate, and chance, and change in human life,
 High actions and high passions best describing.

PARADISE REGAIN'D.

PROLOGUE.

*The picture deign to judge with candour due,
 We now prepare to exhibit to your view ;
 Help'd by no study of effect, that draws,
 In spite of nature, from the crowd applause :
 It aims alone to please, with sober art,
 Nor with pathetic varnish thrill the heart.
 The subject you will find (howe'er remote,
 To Britons born of memorable note,)
 The final contest, when the Danes, who long
 With rage relentless, and with numbers strong,
 Threat'ned the hopes of England to o'erwhelm,
 By Alfred's genius baffled, fled the realm ;
 And years of peace the victor could employ,
 To plan that freedom which we now enjoy.*

[to the side boxes.

*You to whom rank and fortune grant on earth
 A power unrivall'd to encourage worth ;
 See to what cause ye owe the prosperous state,
 Whence we are destin'd to behold, elate,
 The foreign tribes, who art's perfection boast,
 On all sides hasten to our island's coast :*

[looking round the house.

*And you, who shew, without a wish to roam,
Britain's pre-eminence in arts at home ;
And taste with industry combine, the land
To adorn, and distant markets to command ;
Observe the fortune of that glorious day,
Since which the laws all equally obey ;
Have rous'd your enterprize, and bid you feel
Your own advantage in the public weal :*

[to the gallery.

*You too, on whose support our state relies,
Of the just measures of the good and wise ;
To which your ardour, by no hindrance check'd,
And loyal spirit, wisely give effect,
Proof to the specious arguments of foes ;
See how that honour'd government arose :
Which ever has secur'd, and will secure,
Alike from violence the rich and poor ;
And both of ease and freedom, gives you more,
With comfort join'd, than has been felt before.*

[to all.

*If these reflections, the design suggests,
Excite a generous bias in your breasts ;
The solemn sentence we shall wait unaw'd,
Sure you will mildly censure—or applaud.*

PROLOGUE

WRITTEN BY THE AUTHOR IN THE YEAR 1789; AND ORIGINALLY
INTENDED TO BE SPOKEN AT THE FIRST REPRESENTATION
OF THE PLAY.

*You who in rhyme receive, at this dread hour,
Petitions, rang'd along the seats of power ;
That warn you still to weigh with kind intent,
Each opposite desire and differing bent ;
Our Author, Critics, asks your favouring ear,—
Or, shall he say he wishes you severe ?
Those ancient rules that form the simple plot,
With warmth discourag'd, nor alone forgot,
Observ'd by him, exhort you in his cause,
Sharply to curb him with Athenian laws.
The grace of ages past, or other climes,
Bestow on England's happy shore and times ;
Just to their fame, and wash some honour'd day,
Their stain of superfluity away.
Yet if 'tis prejudice infects the scene
The weak contagion need not raise our spleen,
Th' abuse is not so flagrant in our Isle,
Some order'd piece dares peep out once awhile ;*

*Mild ancient criticism with lynx's sight,
Tho' still convinc'd that reason must be right;
To genius ne'er its honours due refus'd,
And deem'd it oft the want of care excus'd.
And they whose practice, critics, but impart
Such dull examples of dramatic art,
Those Bards, like Shakspeare (faith, be it confess)
Two thousand years have rul'd the willing breast!
Nor did they feel Art's drudgery so great,
Who amid toils of war that free a state,
Still oft'ner call'd the crowd, new pomps to see,
Than modern bards, with all their liberty!
What tho' the fiction no man true suspect,
Still strong delusion has encreas'd effect.
If Fable merit most as Truth's ally,
If the unbroken chain detain the eye,
And lead it just with the constraint it ought,
To call attention, yet not torture thought,
Then is some weight in Aristotle's rules;
Some claim have critics to more praise than fools.
What is said now, be said with deference due,
To English judges,—and those judges—you.
No chamber counsel can a verdict give,
Nor may the closet make a drama live.
From legal numbers, placed in order fit,
Like you in Boxes, Gallery, and Pit,*

*The sentence past!—yet must it have no flaw,
Nor bear down equity, because 'tis law.
Perhaps too, fitness has its charm you'll find,
And order's beauty strikes the noblest mind.
Whate'er be right, our Author strove to bring
Each power, in aid of his mistrusted wing.
Since genius oft is felt with little cause,
And thus to feel it asks not more applause,
He stoop'd to art, and, cautious, deign'd to shew
The assistant string of the dramatic bow.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

ALFRED, *king of England.*

EDMUND, *the son and heir of Alfred, then very young.*

MERVIN, *prince of South Wales, dependent on Alfred.*

ETHELRED, *minister and general of the English.*

CEOLUPH, *an English nobleman.*

CEOLUPH'S *vassal.*

SIWARD, }
OSWAY, } *English officers.*

RODOLPH, *a harper.*

KENRITH, *a Danish captain.*

1st *Soldier.*

2nd *Soldier.*

Soldiers of different nations engaged in the battle.

WOMEN.

ELSITHA, *queen of England.*

EDITHA, *an old woman inhabiting the cottage.*

Female attendants.

THE
BATTLE OF EDDINGTON.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

EDDINGTON. The morning mists and shades, cast by the surrounding hills, render the distant objects confused. In the foreground, which is illuminated by the early and slanting rays, a cottage, at the border of a wood, on one side, and another wood on the opposite one. Enter the English driving the Danes before them. Afterwards,

MERVIN, ETHELRED. *Soldiers waiting.*

Eth. Advance the prisoner, soldiers. Here I wait
you. [*Exeunt Soldiers.*]

SCENE II.

MERVIN, ETHELRED.

At length, brave Mervin, to our firm attack,
Have the fierce Danes given way, and, o'er the plain,

Soft-hearted pity hails the quiet hour,
Hope promises so near of victory. 5
Fortune looks kinder on us; yet I fear'd,
Believe me, prince, our enemy's success,
Who rallying, drove us, in the warm pursuit,
Back from this conquer'd station, threat'ned worse.
Much I suspect it sprang from treachery. 10

Merv. Thy words must fill each hearer with amaze!
Can Britons, valiant Ethelred, exist,
So base of soul, as privately to treat
With foreign armies, and betray the cause,
Both of their country, and the Christian world? 15

Eth. I fear it is too certain, and my fears,
I trust, preserv'd us. I have now oppos'd
As Alfred's general, with due success,
Ere 'twas too late, the progress of the danger.
A timely movement has secur'd, perhaps, 20
The British army, and this plotting lord,
Cannot, I trust, surround us.

Merv. Who is this,
Rank only makes conspicuous to disgrace him?

Eth. [*giving a letter.*] That scroll may best explain
the doubtful story.

Merv. None, sure, can doubt. Lord Ceoluph has
sign'd it, 25

And treats full plainly with the troops of Ireland,
Who war against us opposite that ground,
Which, with his troops, he holds.

Eth. It is his vassal,
Who, ere he left the precincts of our army,
Was seized, and found the bearer of this letter. 30

Merv. What are thy orders? shall I seek the traitor,
Among his very guards?

Eth. No; I will seek him.
We must be secret here, lest he escape,
Finding our purpose; and, in truth, respect
Is his just due, till evidence disprove 35
He entertain'd our former hope, to draw
These Irish to our side.

Merv. Whence rose your hope?

Eth. Well thou remember'st that late victory
On Devon's shore, when Danish Hubba fell,
And those who follow'd him, to invade us, fled 40
Astonish'd at our unexpected valour,
And sought their ships, leaving our men triumphant.
'Twas what first cheer'd our drooping spirits, and thou

Wast straight encourag'd to declare thy friendship ;
And, with thy subjects of South Wales, hast join'd
us. 45

Merv. 'Tis true, we boldly fix'd on our allies ;
But how did Ireland's conquer'd sons discover
Aversion to their lords, or love to us ?

Eth. Know that when, mask'd in a mean harper's
habit,

The king pass'd unsuspected many a day 50
Within the Danish camp, he found those troops
Muttering reproach against their pagan masters ;
While he, and every Briton, for the achievement,
Were grac'd with their unanimous applause ;
Their zeal almost broke forth in mutiny. 55

Merv. Ah ! why was not some earlier compact
form'd ?

Eth. The time would ill permit, and Alfred rather
Chose to forbear, when first our forces met,
Than lose the occasion to surprise our foes,
While they were plung'd in thoughtless revelry, 60
And dreamt not of us—But the vassal comes.

Merv. Name then the service, which thy wisdom
deems

Best suited to the powers I consecrate
To the great cause we fight for.

Eth. Honour'd chief!

The inquiry, which our duty now enjoins, 65
May soon determine thee—wait here its issue.

SCENE III.

MERVIN, ETHELRED. *To them re-enter Soldiers with
Vassal in chains.*

Eth. Dost thou still plead, the object of thy errand
Was for the general good?

Vass. Truth cannot vary:

My first assertion may condemn, or clear me.

Eth. Favour will not be shewn to stubbornness. 70

Vass. I seek no favour, but from English laws.

Eth. Thy speech is bold: But, with this letter, say,
What message did thy lord entrust to thee?

Vass. [*aside.*] How answer this? [*loud.*] It was
to warn the Irish

That reconciliation would become two lands 75

So leagu'd, as legends tell us ours have been,

In constant amity, from earliest times:

Supporters both of the pure Christian faith ;
(While unbelieving tribes nigh wrought its downfall)
Till one late lost that honourable title. 80
This he conjur'd the Irish to recover,
Again unite with us, and dread to leave
A growing labour to our single strength.

Eth. Thy tale is plausible, as is thy spirit
Ready to improve the advantage of free laws ; 85
Whose lenity, though wise, oft screens the guilty,
And renders odious the firm foes of treason.
Yet do not they regard it. British justice
Can note the obstacles by freedom rais'd,
And glory in them.

SCENE IV.

MERVIN, ETHELRED, *Vassal, Soldiers.* To them OSWAY,
and some of the Queen's Attendants.

Osw. Give, respected lord, 90
Quick counsel to the queen, the fair Elsitha,
Who, with her son, young Edmund, seeks this cottage.

Eth. No sooner we succeed to advance one step,
Then fate returns us to the ground we left.
How came you ?

Osw. Captive led, from our retreat, 95
By stragglers, seeking here their countrymen ;
But rescu'd, not far distant, by our troops.

Eth. How could they pierce the marshes which
conceal'd you?

Osw. They did not. Scarce you left us, when
the queen
Found in the apartment an unopen'd writing, 100
Which darkly warn'd the king of ill designs.
Deaf to remonstrance, to o'ertake the army,
She rashly ventur'd forth.

Eth. Thou hast, brave prince,
An apt occasion to exert thy zeal:
Go to the army, and conduct a band
Hither, to guard the queen.

Merv. Ere long expect it. [*Exit.*

SCENE V.

ETHELRED, *Attendants, Vassal, Soldiers.*

Eth. You from her sight remove, my friends, the
prisoner ;

But watch him near and closely. He must soon
To Alfred answer, on a charge of treason.

[*Exeunt Att. and Vassal.*]

SCENE VI.

ETHELRED, SIWARD, *Attendants, Soldiers.* To them, enter
ELSITHA, EDMUND, SIWARD, and other *Attendants.*

Els. What did I hear of Alfred and of treason ? 110
Alas, I plainly see, I have been led
By no false warning to resume my fear
Of treachery's deeds, and tremble for his life !
Those fetters, Ethelred, full surely prove it :
Yes, they declare that enemies at home 115
(The basest enemies) assist the Danes ;
They hold their meetings, and they whet their daggers.
Not all the qualities that grace your king,
His spotless virtue, or his public spirit ;
Not all his wisdom can unite the people. [*weeps.* 120

Eth. Princess, the danger is at length subdu'd,
And what there was, thy fears had magnified.

Els. Ah, be not too secure : for have not, say,

Too often base assassins, won by Danes,
Pledg'd them, ere this, their horrible support ? 125

Eth. We now less fear it. His reviv'd adherents,
Rouz'd from the lethargy of long distress,
And still excited by this day's advantage,
Will keep a wakeful eye upon their prince,
Through the contending crowd. Hope feeds their zeal.
Even now, among the troops, to every mind
Does fond remembrance trace his various merits,
Mark'd in their looks, their voices, as we pass ;
His matchless eloquence, his manly beauty,
His martial glory is the theme of all. 135

Siw. My lord, our purpose waits thy approbation.

Eth. You mean to search that cot ?

Siw. Yes ; o'er the plain

Its solitary shelter caught our notice,
Shewn by the rising sun ; we came forthwith :
We would prepare it for the queen's reception. 140

Eth. Do so ; but learn, I must depart in speed ;
And be not you long absent from your queen,
Though you be thus advis'd. Suspect all counsel,
Till Mervin's presence, with the guards, secure you.

[*Exeunt Siw. and some Attendants, into the cottage.*

SCENE VII.

ELSITHA, EDMUND, ETHELRED, *Attendants, Soldiers.*

Eth. Soldiers, return, like lightning, to the army; 145
And tell the king what here demands his presence!

1 *Sold.* We shall not linger in our way, to drive
Invaders from the land.

Eth. 'Twas spoke like Britons. [*Exeunt*
Soldiers.

SCENE VIII.

ELSITHA, EDMUND, ETHELRED, *Attendants.*

Eth. Princess, the expected chief will soon relate
What haste forbids me, and dispel thy fears. 150
[*Exit.*

SCENE IX.

ELSITHA, EDMUND, *Attendants.*

Els. Ill hadst thou far'd, poor wretch, had it prov'd
true
Thy father had been slain. How wouldst thou hope
To rule a country? how conduct thyself;
When we had triumph'd over these our foes?

Edm. But often, sure, I heard thee tell my
father, 155

That we should never gain the victory.

Els. Now, child, the times are chang'd; the wise
assure us

Our new allies give us full cause for hope.

We shall with ease subdue our adversaries.

Edm. Who is the ally?

Els. The powerful king of Scotland; 160
Who sends his forces to support thy father;
And would ensure thy birthright by his arms.

Edm. May Heaven reward him for his gracious aid
Against the wicked; those who slew its priests,
And burnt the holy places of its worship. 165

Els. But all their brave endeavours will be vain,
If thou, an helpless claimant of the crown,
Canst not compose the jarring interests,
And guard with policy what they restore,
For thine, and England's surety.

Edm. I will try; 170
For I remember what my father said.

Els. What hast thou heard him say?

Edm. "A king's first care,"

He told us, “ was to single virtue forth ;
And make mankind respect its bright example.”
Oft too he said, “ he ought not to forget,
Those trusty subjects, who, in all his sufferings,
Fought at his side, or shar’d in his distress.”
So would I treat my friends.

175

Els. And how thy foes ?

Edm. As I have seen my father.

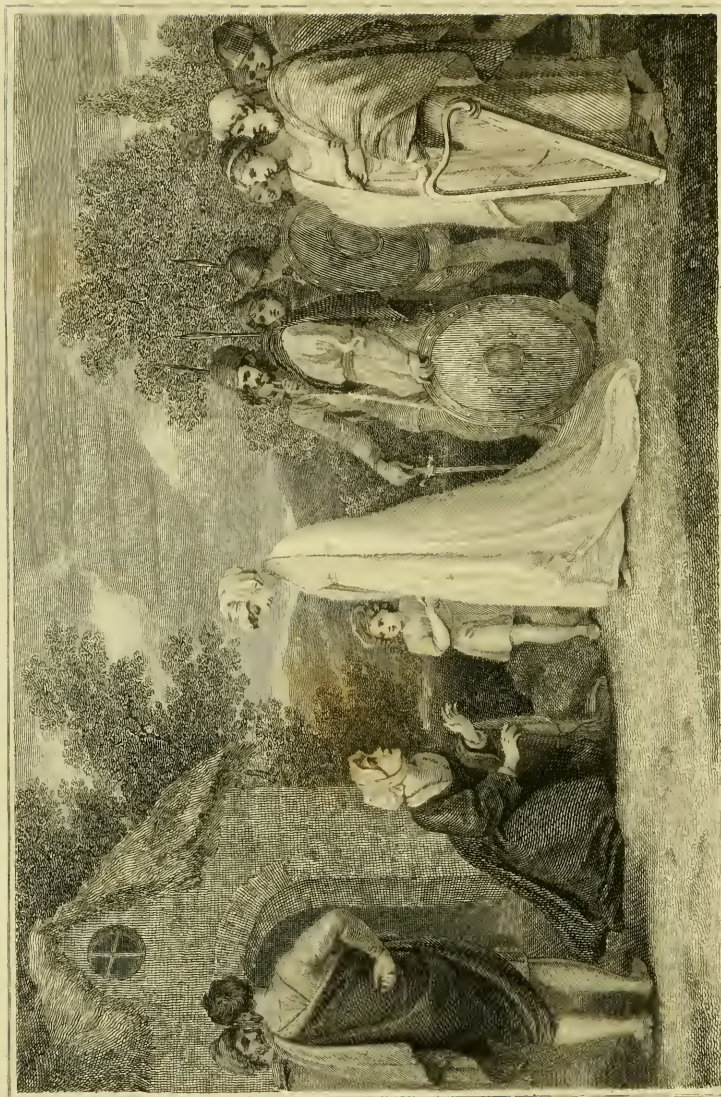
Els. How was that?

Edm. He spared the conquer'd Danes, and heard
their prayers ; 180

Saying, “ resentment towards our enemies
Disgraced the conqueror, and was mean and useless.
The humbled wretch could not be humbled more ;
'Twas folly then to spurn his gratitude,
When clemency might win it, fix his love, 185
And in his heart, though savage, plant the seeds
Of justice, loyalty, and mild religion.”

Els. [*embracing him.*] Bless'd be thy memory, and
that ready judgment,

Which stamps its use ; when slow maturing time
Shall waken in thy mind its latest fruits, 190
Mayst thou, my child, reward a parent's care ;



Drawn by R. Smith Engr. R. A.

Engraved by W. S. W.

*Thine loyalty, in dangerous times like these,
 Moments, however trifling, those who feel it,
 And merit gratitude from all that's virtuous.*

B of Edgington, Act I. Scene

Published March 1804 by J. Baskin 173 Piccadilly

Mayst thou pursue the footsteps of thy sire,
And reach, with him, true glory.

SCENE X.

ELSITHA, EDMUND, *Attendants.* *To them, enter SIWARD,
and Attendants from the cottage.*

Siw.

Queen, we found

The tenant of this cot, oppress'd with fears
Which the loud tumult of the battle round her 195
Had cherish'd long. The well known garb of Britons,
As on our entering troop she fix'd her eyes,
At once reliev'd her mind, and cheer'd her aspect.

SCENE XI.

ELSITHA, EDMUND, SIWARD, *and Attendants.* *To them,
enter EDITHA, from the cottage.*

Els. Much we rejoice, good cottager, to think
Thou art not willing to withhold thy aid 200
From Britons in distress.

Ed.

Whate'er assistance
Lies in the power of helpless Editha,

You may command. It is, alas! too small,
Besides her daily prayers to righteous Heaven
For the good king's success.

Els. Lead, worthy friend, 205
Where we may now repose; and take our thanks.
Know, loyalty in dangerous times like these,
Honours, however helpless, those who feel it,
And merits gratitude from all that's virtuous.

[*Exeunt Elsitha, Editha, and Edmund, into the
cottage.*]

SCENE XII.

Attendants.

Siw. [*to the harper.*] Methinks your art, though
not intended e'er 210
For such a place, were properly employ'd
To soothe the queen, and, while it can, prevent
The ills of painful thought.

Osw. 'Tis wisely counsell'd :
Yes; let this desert hear harmonious sounds.

Siw. At least, if ever, now she needs relief, 215
When treason to war's terrors adds its own,
So fearfully o'ermatching female weakness.

SONG.

*You whom low gain, in secret, arms
Against fair Britain, favour'd queen,
Ah, hear her plead her varied charms, 220
Of social towns, and meadows green!
See bliss obey her sage command;
And spare, ah spare your native land!*

*If other climes choice gifts produce,
Where vintage crowns the race of toil; 225
Or fruits of a more tasteful juice,
That ripen in the sunny soil;
Heaven showers on us with lavish hand;
Then spare, ah spare your native land!*

*Our chosen fields, the happy reign 230
Of freedom boast, with reason join'd;
Hence industry o'er every plain
Surveys the wonders she design'd:
Wide harvests wave, flocks feeding stand,
And bid you spare your native land. 235*

*No common ardour fires the soul
Of Britons that, to Alfred true,
Mark his past laws the unjust controul,
And hope his future toils to view.
For he your rising greatness plann'd* 240
Who bids you spare your native land.

*He, to repel the furious foe,
First shelter'd with a fleet our coast ;
(Reserv'd our best defence to show,)
Which henceforth shall be Britain's boast.* 245
*This praise, at least, his deeds demand ;
Then spare, ah spare your native land !*

*Or if this king, this country, fail,
Ye hold, to merit your applause ;
Haste where less haughty lords prevail ;* 250
*Where justice springs from freer laws.
Go ; ease our fears, a blameless band ;
And spare, ah spare your native land !*

SCENE XIII.

Attendants. To them, enter CEOLUPH.

Siw. Thou, whom we see approaching to this spot,
Art come, we hope, and by thy garb presume, 255
With friendly purpose.

Ceo. Friendly sure to Britons
He comes, who, summon'd to a meeting here,
Aims only to deliberate on their welfare.
Yes, Ceoluph still owns unrivall'd zeal;
And say, intent upon what separate project, 260
You shun the war?

Siw. Our office is our answer:
We are not among those the war has brought.

Ceo. What! is the queen arriv'd? the event I feel
Sufficient to alarm a loyal breast:
But say, can Ceoluph's advice avail her; 265
Or has she met with earlier counsellors?

Siw. Some we have seen, and thankfully decline
The courteous offer.

Ceo. Yet I still may serve you
By joyful tidings: for I wait the king.

Vass. [*behind the scenes.*] Yes, 'tis Lord Ceoluph.

O give me way. 270

Ceo. Those accents seem familiar to my ear.

Siw. We only know 'tis one accus'd of treason ;
Perhaps for this thou hast the royal summons.

SCENE XIV.

CEOLUPH, SIWARD, OSWAY, and Attendants. *To them,
enter Vassal, breaking from his guards.*

Vass. O lend thy aid to suffering innocence !
Hear, my good lord.

Ceo. I know this man, my friends, 275
And curious am to learn what shameful charge—

Vass. I heard the news of the intended meeting,
My lord, deliver'd in a well known voice,
And came—O tell the king my innocence.

Ceo. Let me in private question him, my friends ; 280
I gather from his agitated air,
He less confusedly would unfold his tale
If unobserv'd.

Siw. [*to the Attendants.*] Retire you to the wood
From whence the prisoner came, and thence observe
him,

As is your duty, but remote from hearing : 285

We, with the caution which our general counsell'd,
Will, in the cottage, near the queen remain. [*going.*

Ceo. But still beware lest her too great impatience
Afflict her in the important conference ;
Say not the king waits here.

Siw. My lord, I will not. 290

[*Exeunt Siward with a few into the cottage, Osway
and the other Attendants into the wood.*

SCENE XV.

CEOLUPH, Vassal.

Ceo. We now may freely speak. What mean those
chains ?

Do they not bode such knowledge of our purpose,
As blasts all hope.

Vass. No ; thanks to the old spirit
Of Saxon liberty, whose nicety brooks not
That summary conviction which denies 295
The respite I enjoy. I firmly answer'd,
Trusting that time would furnish means of flight.
O my good lord, how hadst thou smil'd to hear
Thy slave debate the interests of Ireland ! [*laughs.*

Ceo. 'Twas wisely done ; the plea that freedom
yields us, 300

Shall make its cause our own, though we despise it.

But say, must Alfred and his family

Meet at my risk ; he will not soon release me,

Hearing from them that treason's in the wind.

Vass. I guess'd thy late injunction was to hinder

The queen's ill-timed appearance, and 'twas well ;

Yet art thou ignorant of half our hopes.

Know, enterprise will have a noble field,

And we be gainers by our seeming hindrance ;

Retarded only with his queen and son, 310

No vulgar hostages, to join the Danes !

Ceo. What is thy plan ? say, did the Danes suggest,

Since my first message, any means of this ?

Vass. Yes ; so they hop'd to repossess this station ;

I thought the mention useless, when our general 315

Led on the charge, and overbore resistance.

Then quickly seize the occasion—feign a flight—

The Irish will pursue, and our mix'd bands

From ambush burst on these defenceless quarters.

Ceo. But why defenceless ? you expect, I judge, 320

The guards.

Vass. They will possess the avenues
Conducting to this ground.

Ceo. And so repel us.

Vass. No; beneath one a Roman arch was found
To pass unseen, that in the distant wood
Is open'd, and appears. 'Twas pierc'd so late, 325
Not even the neighbouring tenant of this cottage
Can give due notice of the wish'd surprise,
Should you attempt it; but its outlet, mark'd
By yonder rugged hillock, will admit you
Ev'n to this spot, deceiving every guard. 330

Ceo. I know not how we may fall back unseen
Again, so far retreating under ground;
Above it, now we shall be closely watch'd.

Vass. Then quickly leave the king, and seek the
army.

Ceo. No; first the chance of a more flattering
fortune 335
Must not pass slighted by; for, be assured,
I meditate one final effort now
To gain the royal favour, long enjoy'd
By the unworthy minions of his reign.

O think how I should triumph in their downfall!— 340

Besides, the English cause is now successful.

Vass. Be not deceiv'd; he never will desert
His loyal servants.

Ceo. Am I then to learn
That interest is man's god, and Alfred human?
My power is matchless in the land, my will, 345
If kindly he receive the overture,
Prepared to crown him a despotic prince.

Vass. Thou wilt delay the attempt, my lord, till
time
(Which we most fear,) give credit to the charge;
And ev'n thy own retainers dare not aid thee. 350

Ceo. If I succeed in this, remember, thou
Wilt soar with me to all the heights of favour.

Vass. And, if thou fail, captivity will sink me.

Ceo. That is less sure—When thou couldst hope
so late
For means of flight, what raises thy despair? 355

Vass. But see, the king approaches with his fol-
lowers;
To wait their coming might be fatal to thee,

If he have heard the tale of our detection,
And hazard thy arrest—See, he speaks to them.

Ceo. 'Tis but to enjoin them to remain aloof; 360
While he comes on alone. Thanks to yon thickets,
He has not seen one messenger to instruct him;
Do thou draw only further still from hence
The queen's attendants, lest discovery
Again be risk'd.

Vass. I go, without delay. [*Exit.*

SCENE XVI.

CEOLUPH. *To him, enter ALFRED.*

Alf. A sound of voices reach'd me, as I came,
Assisted by this stillness of the air;
I fear, my lord, I mar some conference.

Ceo. 'Twas one subordinate, who listening took
His orders; he resigns his place to Alfred. 370

Alf. This careful secrecy becomes a meeting
Of different sort; time only now permits me,
To ask thee, the position of thy troops.

Ceo. Yet did I dare to think, ere Alfred form'd
The solemn contract between king and people, 375

And rude beginnings of the British state,
The well-meant counsels of plain honesty
Might gain his patient hearing.

Alf. Is't then so ?

And mean'st thou to discuss what might employ
A senate long, now in the hour of battle ? 380

Ceo. Yes ; for 'tis now that prudence most requires
The close discussion of this weighty subject ;
While thou hast yet within thy power the means
To make it useful. I bestow those means :
My well-prov'd followers, if thou say the word, 385
Shall, when the rest victoriously disband
After our tedious toils, remain in arms ;
They shall compel the people to adopt
What laws thou wilt, and prove that Ceoluph
May be suspected, but was ever loyal. 390

Alf. 'Tis, I acknowledge, an important counsel,
Nor mark'd with feeble resolution, this,
To levy war upon my subjects, led
By dreams of fancied good. Yet let me say,
Our maxims differ wide ; I hold, my lord, 395
That only is, in states, an wholesome change
Which springs from peace and unanimity.

Ceo. May then no spirit of rebellious sort,
We could prevent, burst forth among the people,
And spread destructive to whate'er we prize? 400
If so, to extinguish it asks active care.

Alf. What instance canst thou bring in proof of it?

Ceo. Their swelling hopes, that undissembled zeal
With which all cry, "Alfred will surely grant us
Those rights our Saxon ancestors possess'd; 405
He will restore us the regretted jury."

Alf. 'Tis that same argument, which, in thy judgment,

Declares them wrong, that rescues them, in mine,
From every blame, and justifies their hopes :
For be assur'd, if any recompence 410
Of public services to me were grateful,
It were that Britons should, in future, say,
"Alfred established here the ancient jury."

Ceo. Did I, as clearly know that government
Thy wisdom plans, as this divulged intention, 415
I should not hesitate, my liege, to affirm
What rights consist with it, or what possess
Too uncongenial natures to endure it.
If to the people's judgment thou confide

The helm of state, thy reverence of their will, 420
Steer they or wrong or right, will ne'er obstruct them.

Alf. Think not I wish democracy should rule
In England's realm ; too rare is its success.

Ceo. And yet I know no other government ;
Where such wide liberty of speech and action, 425
Unaw'd by power, can prove the people's boast.

Alf. Instead of governments which have been tried,
Think but of one Rome's sages sought to try,
And 'twill unriddle all the mystery :
For 'tis that time (which never may return) 430
When theory, to statesmen oft delusive,
Can, without dread of harm, give law to practice.
I hope, my lord, to see in this our island,
Power duly dealt among three different orders ;
King, lords, and commons ; and Heaven speed their
counsels ! 435

Ceo. [*aside.*] Here is an unexpected road to favour :
I'll instant strike into the lucky track.

Alf. What sayst thou of our hope to realize
The beauteous visions of immortal men
In the calm shades of philosophic ease ? 440

Ceo. Mute with amazement, I contemplate, sire,

That penetrating sense which could discover
When theory lays down her harlot arts,
And give her heighten'd charms secure to Britons.
Yes, let me now congratulate the country, 445
In which true liberty shall first be seen :
The nations of the earth, in future times,
Shall view with envy this high-favour'd isle ;
(Where policy unites each true advantage,)
And, while they sum its blessings, think of Alfred. 450

Alf. It gives me joy, since thou art satisfied
With my design, that such repugnance conquer'd,
Leaves us no further subject of delay.

Ceo. Believe it, ardently, my liege, I hope
To second thy great aim, and, if thou speak, 455
Hasten to execute whate'er commands
Are given, and justify thy confidence :
Name but the office thou design'st.

Alf. My lord ?

Ceo. No slow or sluggish agent shall I be
To do thy will ; tell me, I pray, my liege, 460
What warlike enterprize shall be my task
To forward thy intent, and how I may,
Partaking of thy councils, prove at once
My secrecy and zeal.

Alf. The topic seems
More copious than erewhile, nor longer fit 465
To be debated here. Tell me, my lord,
Where lie thy troops?

Ceo. That path conducts to them.

Alf. Then know, I purpos'd to inspect them with
thee,
From some adjoining place, and on our way
Can hear whatever thou mayst choose to treat of. 470
Dispatch that business soon, which, when I came,
Employ'd thee, and o'ertake me in the wood. [*Exit.*

SCENE XVII.

CEOLUPH.

Ceo. I see how likely is my suit to prosper.—
Neglect, in one whom we can harm, becomes
Intolerable as insult.—[*looking after Alfred.*]—My
obedience 475
Thou hast once more, 'tis after that—revenge! [*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

The progress of the day discovers the background of the prospect, hitherto in shade, as the foreground is at present. The ruins now appear, on a distant hill, of a monastery, which had been destroyed by the Danes; and near which, as was usual, a stream passes, rushing down the declivity.

SIWARD, OSWAY.

Siw. I tremble, hearing you, to view yon scene
Display'd, so brightly, by the ascending sun,
The work of no far distant enemy.
Then has the chief, by this deceitful tale, 480
Withdrawn the king from hence.

Osw. We could not find them;
Though promised Alfred would survey the ground,
So better to secure the queen; and then
Would hasten to her presence.

Siw. While designs
Are form'd against us, do our guards delay? 485

Osw. No ; late we saw the prince disposing them,
And told him our distress, ere we return'd
To make it known to you. Behold, he comes.

SCENE II.

SIWARD, OSWAY, and *Attendants.* *To them, enter MERVIN.*

Siv. Prince, we would gladly learn what cause of
fear

This lord's suspicious conduct gives to us. 490

Merv. The general's promptness has remov'd
already,

My friends, all cause ; the traitor knew no force
Could leave the assembled army, ere these succours ;
He rather hopes the king will be deceiv'd
By some new wile ; from which his wisdom guard
him ! 495

If the queen need my presence, I would know,
And do, her will ; I shall not be far off. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

SIWARD, OSWAY, and *Attendants*.

Siw. I will convey the message, and, meanwhile,
Let music's sound exhilarate the queen,
As she desir'd, commending graciously 500
Our late attention. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.

OSWAY, and *Attendants*.

Osw. [*to the Harper.*] Far thou wilt not, sure,
Seek for a subject; to the worthy prince,
Who late has left us, thou may'st now do honour,
And sing the praise of Arthur, and of Wales.

SONG.

When Arthur fill'd the island-throne, 505

He stemm'd the boisterous flood that pour'd

The exhaustless strife; on hosts alone

The champion urg'd his guardian sword,

*Piercing the Angle's firm array ;
The Power invok'd to Christians known, 510
As beam'd bright CALIBURN¹ a ray
Auspicious to the Briton's fame,
And, to the savage tribe of Thor,
Amazement, o'er the files of war,
And death, where'er it darted, came. 515*

*Chiefs prostrate lie, whose aspect awes,
As oaks with ruin heap the ground,
Fall'n, ere the threats of lightning pause,
And cease the whirlwind-waste around.
For toils like these, the Cambrian sings, 520
Absolv'd from nature's common laws,
The destin'd sire of future kings
Reclines on flowers of fairy land ;
And, o'er the race he fir'd in vain
With freedom, and his ancient reign, 525
Again shall stretch his wish'd command.*

*But tell, my harp, that from on high
Subdued the terrors of the tomb ;
He sees fierce arts from Albion fly,
Rejoicing in his country's doom ; 530*

¹ *Arthur's sword.*

See old Consent, and public Care
Greet us with titles arms deny,
And sends his banish'd bands to share
A friendship may forever live ;
While to the land the victor sways 535
Their names alike (if such be praise)
The foes of other ages give.

SCENE V.

OSWAY, and Attendants. *To them, enter ALFRED meeting*
SIWARD.

Siw. The prince, my liege, has doubtless made
our state
Known, as you pass'd the guards.

Alf. 'Tis true, I know it ;
But Ethelred ere this had told me all, 540
When, with the traitor Ceoluph, I saw him.

Siw. Joyful, as Britons, we behold our king
Deliver'd from his snares.

Alf. I know not, friends,
If we may suffer more from his designs.
Suspicious of his faith, I had resolv'd 545

With him to view his troops, which late employ'd us.
But when we saw the distant Ethelred,
This traitor, fertile in deceitful pretexts,
Told me,—that now to better counsellors
He left his king, and went where duty call'd him. 550
Long I observ'd him march with hurried pace ;
But could not learn his purpose, till at length
He disappear'd among his own retainers.

Siw. What dost thou order us, my liege, to do ?

Alf. Fly with the queen and prince, avoiding
here 555

To leave them longer to the event of war.
By me instructed, Ethelred will keep
His trusty bands prepar'd to second Mervin,
And rush, if needed, to protect this station.

[*Exit into the cottage.*]

SCENE VI.

OSWAY, SIWARD, and *Attendants.*

Siw. Well does the king, to guard, with each pre-
caution, 560

His helpless queen against a barbarous foe.

Osw. Thy words denote unwonted apprehension.

Siw. The woman's late discourse, had'st thou with
us

Enter'd the cottage, might have prov'd to thee
What terror may these savage tribes inspire, 565
Uninfluenc'd by respect for sex or age.

Osw. 'Twere dreadful, surely; but since now
arriv'd,

The guards, I hope, will cover our retreat.

Siw. Heaven grant they do—But hark, the latch
is mov'd :

Fall back. The approaching king will soon instruct
us. 570

SCENE VII.

Enter ALFRED, ELSITHA, and Attendants, from the cottage.

Alf. Yes ; hasten to the pious hermit's cell
I have describ'd, hid in embowering woods ;
Which, though not distant, has been still conceal'd
From wandering Danes, and ever must defy
Their closest search. The deviating track 575
Is mark'd too plainly by the signs I nam'd,

To cost thee pains to find, or need inquiry.
Haste, my Elsitha ; now delay were fatal.

Els. Ah ! rather fly this unavailing strife
Betimes, and, in some corner of the earth, 580
Let thy sad family enjoy thy presence,
And boast the certainty thou liv'st to cheer them.
When war with treason threatens, and this drear wild
Renders more terrible the form of danger,
How killing 'tis to part—that thou mayst meet it ! 585

Alf. Whence is this fear ? or where, in thee once
seen,

The unshaken spirit which so long surpris'd me
While lurking in our wretched residence ?
Where the gay smiles, that half o'ercame my sorrows ?

Els. If duty warn'd me never to make known 590
Wishes and fears that might increase thy troubles,
Or interfere beyond what suits a queen,
Think'st thou I felt, though silent, less alarm ?
Employ'd in studious privacy alone,
(Whose charms thou taught'st me) or domestic
cares, 595

I aim'd not to embarrass lawful power
By base intrigue, or open opposition :



Engraved by F. Goussier del. R. A.

The junction of the Tarn & S. Rhodan at St. Remy in France

Engraved by J. B. Goussier

On such forbearance resolutely bent,
I sought, and gain'd the favour of the people.

Alf. Even as thy virtue merits admiration, 600
So may thy firmness, my *Elsitha*, shine
With equal rays, and charm with blended lustre.
How should we mourn, O, think, each ruin'd hope,
Misled by coward fear, or senseless caution !
Ill-fated outcasts in some foreign land, 605
Soon should we find the poverty we bear
Our future portion, or rely alone
On pitying courtesy for ill-earn'd ease,
And, in its very kindness, feel our fortune.

Els. And dost thou urge to me those weighty
reasons ? 610

Or think I swell with the proud hope of greatness ?—
O *Alfred*, how should I rejoice to share
Even the poor rustic's frugal, humble lot,
So I might see in safety those whose love
Far dearer ties had rooted in my heart. 615
Nor would, I trust, thy sorrows in retirement
Be thus oppressive ; but when study's charms
(Which most avail to banish thy sad thoughts)
Have ceas'd their influence, my unwearied cares—

Alf. 'Tis not the fear of want, but of disgrace, 620
Visits the bosom of the wise or virtuous.
Base is the ruler, if, while hope remains,
He leaves his country threat'ned by a foe ;
But if his steady zeal be known to all,
And lawless violence alone prevail 625
By force of numbers, or the wrongs of fortune,
Then he may quit, without a blush, the contest ;
Then foreign kings receive him with respect,
And all their subjects, when they see, applaud him.

Els. That time is come for thee. O, instant bear
us 630
From this devoted land ! where hope no more
Can tempt to stay.

Alf. [*with enthusiasm.*] Hope, sayst thou ?

Els. And pray tell me,
When thou hast suffer'd many a mournful year,
The worst calamities sad war inflicts,
And art again contending in the field, 635
With the same barbarous and successful foe,
From farther strife what can thy country hope ?

Alf. Each flattering destiny that can exalt
A nation's glory ! cultivated fields,

Where now inhospitable forests spread, 640
And, where the Thames reflects our humble dwellings,
The capital of earth, and happy seat
Of the protected arts; its busy streets
Crowded with industry's rejoicing sons;
While on the matchless stream unnumber'd masts,
Like a wide wood, attract the stranger's eye,
And prove the commerce of the world our own!

Els. O cease to be deluded by thy wishes,
Nor in thy fruitless rhapsodies proceed;
Cease to repeat what I so oft have heard thee, 650
That we should be renown'd in history
For noble deeds, be sovereigns of the sea,
Happy at home; and held abroad the refuge
Of weakness still, and terror of ambition—
No; never, never shall such times arrive. 655

Alf. If I have rais'd thus high my expectation,
'Tis not, be sure, without sufficient cause.
In my brave Britons I behold a race
Dauntless in war, but mild and just in peace;
Fill'd with that public spirit, whose pure aim, 660
And prompt activity extend improvement,
And fir'd with every great and generous view:

As if rare properties of air and soil
Could add peculiar energy to nature ;
Refine their heads and animate their hearts. 665

SCENE VIII.

ALFRED, ELSITHA, *Attendants.* *To them, enter*
1st Soldier.

Alf. [*hastily.*] Sounds lately heard inform, with
this thy presence,
Of some advantage newly won or lost.
Comest thou from Ethelred ?

1st Sold. He bade me say,
That desperate foes, with scarce diminish'd strength,
Advisedly, in one arduous effort centering 670
Courage and skill, and charging with success,
Compell'd us to retreat ; nor yield the ground :
Yet knows he thy appearance soon will shine
Our gloom away. In such an unwish'd chance,
When fell invasion menaces a realm, 675
He says, if some brave prince, his country's hope,
In whom the activity and fire of youth
Enchant the soldiery, dare lend his aid

To inspire the battle ; soon all see, at once,
The danger vanish, where he leads the way ; 680
Soon on the assailants do they fiercely rush,
And drive them recreant back.

Alf. [*agitated as by suspense.*] Tell him, I come !

[*Exit 1st Sold.*]

SCENE IX.

ALFRED, ELSITHA, *Attendants.*

Els. And wilt thou, Alfred, then delay to fly
Peril so imminent ?

Alf. [*after a pause—going.*] Yes—as his duty
Enjoins the king of such deserving subjects. 685

Els. Whate'er the valued qualities they boast,
They cannot prosper, when by their misfortunes,
Heaven plainly seems unfriendly to their cause.

Alf. 'Twill be the duty, then, of noble souls,
To leave an high example of their firmness 690
To future times ; to brave superior power
Even at the price of life, and be the last
To flatter pride, and to submit to wrong.

Els. This were resistance to the Almighty's will.

Alf. No ; rather say, 'twere a devout submission
To that great trial of our faith and valour,
Th' Almighty has impos'd on us : nor think,
Elsitha, virtue can be chang'd by fortune.
Oft, o'er the field, in which the patriot strives
For blameless victory, do gazing angels, 700
Forewarn'd of his inevitable fate,
Shed their celestial tears, and, when he falls,
They venerate the spot as holy ground.

Els. This praise of slaughterous deeds might suit
a heathen ;
But, Alfred, thee far less, who art a Christian, 705
And oft would'st talk of thy contempt of war.
Our mild religion, well thou know'st, enjoins
Pardon of injuries, and bids us live
In mutual love, fraternity, and peace.

Alf. These *heaven-taught* maxims often may
mislead 710
Through feeble judgment, or dark policy,
That, envying the fair fame to virtue given,
May feign its worth imperfect to supplant it :
Though, when such arts have prosper'd, they must yield
To like necessity, or act less justly. 715

To live in lasting peace, is, to the good,
The most approv'd condition ; but, if wrong
Be ever active to disturb their quiet,
'Tis love of peace that arms them to control it.

Els. Then haste ; pursue the course thy reason
warns, 720

And thy stern virtue grant what thou canst wish
Of honour and renown. Lead forth with thee
Those who may share thy danger, and enjoy
Alike the loud applauses of the world.
Go ; you will leave at home, to humbler hopes, 725
Your weeping wives, a melancholy band,
Who, at their orphan children's future fate
Shall soon be seen to tremble ; while, oppress'd
By our contagious grief, the saddening land—

Alf. No ; I distrust not, leaving thee, that virtue,
Which is so fully tried ; thou wilt not cherish
Such dangerous grief ; nor will the fair of Britain.
Howe'er they move in that appointed sphere,
Which gives its wonted softness to their lustre,
Withdrawn from notice, yet they mark a course 735
Steady and sure, and, while they charm, assist us.
Their spotless faith, from mild discretion sprung,

Would scorn to furnish arms to discontent,
Or, with vain fears, conspire against their country.

Els. Spare thy reproof: acquit me of a weakness,
And one by thee so blam'd. I would obey thee;
Yes, would anticipate by ready deeds,
Thy least desire; yet say, while I behold thee,
What is the secret, through whose mystic virtue,
(For such, perhaps, has been reveal'd to thee) 745
A separation, cruel as I dread,
Can prove our wish?

Alf. To know it is our duty. [*Exit.*

SCENE X.

ELSITHA, Attendants.

Els. Stay, Alfred, O! [*swoons.*

Siv. Look quickly to the queen!
Support her fainting frame.

SCENE XI.

ELSITHA, SIWARD, and Attendants. *To them, enter*
EDITHA.

Siw. Lend, aged matron,
Thy aid. Untoward chance!—But she revives. 750
Els. Afford, good friend, the hospitable shelter
Of thy adjoining roof, that short repose
May there recall my dissipated spirits!
I feel my strength returning—Now lead on.
[*Exeunt Els. and Ed. into the cottage.*]

SCENE XII.

SIWARD and Attendants.

Siw. Go, tell the prince that Alfred has left
orders 755
For our departure. We attend the troops,
As destin'd to escort our helpless band. [*Exit one.*]

SCENE XIII.

SIWARD, OSWAY, and *Attendants*.

Siw. The queen's recover'd strength, ere long, my
friends,
Will prove the signal of our journey. [*a noise under
ground*] Heav'ns!
What noise was that?

Osw. 'Twas surely not far off. 760
[*noise repeated.*

Siw. Alas! the enemy, past doubt, prevail'd
To undermine this station. All is lost,
Unless we prosper in the attempt to bear
The queen to safety. Follow, and assist me.
[*they approach the cottage.*

SCENE XIV.

SIWARD, OSWAY, and *Attendants*.

*To them, enter CEOLUPH, with his men from the subterranean
passage.*

Ceo. Stir you no further, but resign the charge
Ye cannot save; I claim it for the Danes.

[*to the Soldiers.*] Do you obey the orders ye receiv'd.
Fill up that passage straight, to stop the foe ;
This is the cottage ye must first surround ;
And marching slow and silent through the wood, 770
Soon will ye reach the unsuspecting guards,
And find their terror second your assault.

[*Exeunt Soldiers.*]

SCENE XV.

CEOLUPH, SIWARD, OSWAY, and some Soldiers.

Siw. We hope, howe'er success has crown'd your
efforts,

That civil treatment will not be denied
Your royal captives. In compassion grant it. 775

Ceo. Your treatment will be found what ye deserve :
If ye presume on daring violence,
Or are detected in intrigue, beware ;
The eyes of these surrounding troops are on you.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE XVI.

SIWARD, OSWAY, and *Attendants*.

Siw. [*after a silence.*] We, who so little could
foresee the future, 780
Harbour'd just fear; while our best chiefs have err'd
Who deem'd us safe. So weak is human wisdom!

Osw. I dread to think how knowledge of her fortune
May overwhelm the queen. What dost thou counsel?

Siw. Far be it from us, with imprudent haste, 785
To inform the queen of these o'erpowering news:
Till it prove fruitless to conceal them longer,
Spite of our ceaseless efforts. No, my friend,
Rather let us dissemble our reflections;
And do thou, Rodolph, wake some air, to banish 790
Suspicion of our terrible reverse;
As only thoughtful of thy custom'd office.
I will forthwith endeavour to detain her
Till some more favourable turn of fortune. [*Exit.*

SCENE XVII.

OSWAY, and Attendants.

SONG.

O nations, urged by hostile fate 795

*To brave, in adverse ranks the war,
Taught Heaven's mild lore, nor mov'd of late
The praise of savage feats to abhor ;*

For ever quench your kindling rage ;

And ah ! no more that vengeance waste, 800
*Doom'd for the impious head above ;
Or timely seek, with rival haste,
Such lenient aid of peaceful love
As may its lingering ills assuage.*

Ere, on each shore, in strength secure, 805

*We saw the invaders with amaze,
Our drooping country could endure,
With better hope, tempestuous days.*

*Now hapless Christians ease no more,
By social deeds, their common way, 810
Among the rocks encircling life ;
But rudely forc'd asunder stray,
And menac'd by the storms of strife,
Thoughtful of help enjoy'd before.*

*Thou, Ireland, long thy silent sighs 815
With Britain's mingled, shalt remain ;
From Heaven imploring future ties,
That mutual may your sons maintain*

*In endless union, bless'd and free ;
Whence the fair isles, with strength combin'd, 820
Shall happiness, in every land,
From arms protect, and wrong design'd ;
And amid waves, securely stand,
The citadels of liberty.*

SCENE XVIII.

OSWAY, and Attendants. *To them, enter* ELSITHA, EDMUND,
and SIWARD, *from the cottage.*

Els. No, do not urge me longer to delay : 825
Heaven has, I trust, inspir'd, and will support me ;
You see me ready to obey with firmness
The late commands of Alfred ; with what haste
You choose we follow.

[the Attendants seem thunderstruck.

But what means that air
Of blank confusion, and that backward silence ? 830

Edm. *[pointing behind the scenes.]* O mother, what
a crowd is there, and there !

I did not see those men, when first I came.

Els. Ah ! now the riddle is expounded clearly ;
Yes, the successful enemy possesses
This spot, and holds us prisoners. Well I know it :
But say, (if it be true,) say, where is Alfred ?
Sure he escap'd not, and a tenfold fury
Prepares to sacrifice this valiant cause
Of many a pagan's death—this Dread of Danes !

I know what ye would say : yes, at this moment

Does Alfred fall. [*weeps.*

[Edmund runs with an intention of going out.]

Sir. Where dost thou haste, young prince ?

Edm. I'll go to all the soldiers round, and ask them
To spare my father.

Sir. Prince, thy father's safe.

We have not heard the king partakes our fortune

In this mishap, and trust he fled ere this : 845

He is beyond the power of all these soldiers.

Edm. Pray tell me, do they want to kill us too ?

Els. Come, come, my son ; let us retire from hence,
As suits the wretched, where, with thoughts com-
pos'd,

We may implore due fortitude from him 850

Who can deliver us from all distress,

And conquer all our enemies. This way.

[Exit Elsitha, and Edmund, into the cottage.]

SCENE XIX.

SIWARD, OSWAY, *and Attendants.*

Siw. How touching is this state of tender youth,
That half discerns, and rather on worst woes
Looks with the eye of curiosity, 855
Than with the heart of fear : ev'n the queen seems
Too far by pious resignation rais'd
Above the sad calamity she suffers,
To let dejection low'r upon her brow.
Yet much I fear these Danes ; and see advance 860
The British lord, hither conducting one.
Something is, sure, projected, which concerns us.

SCENE XX.

SIWARD, OSWAY, *and Attendants. To them, enter*
CEOLUPH, *and* KENRITH.

Ceo. Abandon straight, to one more worthy trust,
The place where our insulted lenity
Permitted you to stay ! Ye shall no more 865
Repeat your treasons.

Siw. What are they, my lord ?

Ceo. 'Tis rumour'd ye have harp'd seditious tunes
That praise the ancient friendship of our isles,
So to corrupt the Irish.

Siw. No such thought,
My lord, had we; nor e'er could have surmis'd 870
An insignificant attempt to cheer
The drooping queen, had drawn this deep attention.

Ceo. Retire, and to this valiant Dane resign
Your forfeit station. *[Exit.]*

SCENE XXI.

SIWARD, OSWAY, KENRITH, and *Attendants.*

Ken. It perhaps were best,
You first appriz'd her of the purpos'd change; 875
Lest unprepar'd she ill support the trial.

Siw. Soldier, we thank thee for the generous
counsel;
And trust it bodes a spirit that inclines not
To load her weakness with increase of sorrow.

[Exit into the cottage.]

SCENE XXII.

OSWAY, KENRITH, *and Attendants.*

Osw. Eager to shew, in promptness of obedience,
A slight return of kindness, we retire,
And wait at distance, Dane, thy farther orders :
Ev'n gratitude's most unimportant favours
Gain from the just regard. [*Exeunt Attendants.*

SCENE XXIII.

KENRITH. *To him, enter ELSITHA, and SIWARD, from
the cottage.*

Siw. The Dane is yonder. [*Exit.*

SCENE XXIV.

ELSITHA, *and* KENRITH.

Els. Surpris'd at the respect, I learn, good soldier,
Thou pay'st to wretched captives, I came forth ;
Willing to testify a grateful spirit.

Ken. My conduct, princess, is, howe'er it seem,
What justice and humanity require,

And my religion dictates. Were it different, 890
'Twould be at variance with its holy precepts ;
And draw Heaven's known displeasure.

Els. At thy words
I am perplex'd. Say, art thou not a Dane ?

Ken. Those hard-fought battles, where, for many
a year

I strove, accompanied by Danish troops, 895
Bear ample witness, princess, to my country.

Els. Suspect not that, in any country, Dane,
I doubt the worth of virtue such as thine.
Much I admire whatever unknown stock
Teems with such noble fruit ; and think the hand 900
Of Heaven has scatter'd wide the precious seeds
Of true religion, and will bless the harvest.
What light so surely guides thy happy course ?

Ken. One that is darken'd by no cloud of error,
As thou wilt own.

Els. In vain I seek thy meaning. 905

Ken. When lately Ireland, added to our conquests,
Receiv'd our bands, to mingle, as chance led,
Among her own inhabitants, who, long
Ere this, profess'd the peaceful faith of Christ,

We, at their blameless, inoffensive manners, 910
Felt secret awe.

Els. Saint Patrick, well I know,
Had civiliz'd the island where he preach'd,
And made it honour'd in the Christian world ;
We name it, for this cause, the Isle of Saints.
But hasten to thy tale, and say what follow'd. 915

Ken. Full many, influenc'd by the fair example,
Embrac'd with ardour the divine religion ;
And all remain'd, except a few ; but I,
Having the confidence of those who led us,
Attended them, at their command, to invade 920
The coasts of England.

Els. Has, then, providence
So unexpectedly display'd its bounty,
As, in the depth of our despair, to shew us
Favour so rare, and in our prison-guard,
Bestow the best protector ?

Ken. To that title, princess,
My conduct is not destitute of claim.
Not to win glory, but restrain the rage
Of barbarous countrymen, at length, in war
Is my sole care. In these surrounding fields,

Oft have the helpless, of each sex and age, 930
Obtain'd their safety through my secret counsel,
Or needful mediation, from the Danes.

Els. Bless'd is the doctrine whose benign effects
Are thus conspicuous!

Ken. No; the progress yet,
Princess, is small, which Christianity 935
Has made; and, till this time, its peeping dawn,
Hardly gives notice of its cheerful day.
But, by degrees, o'er Europe and the world,
I trust, its peaceful influence will extend;
One mode of policy, one form of virtue, 940
Shall science slowly plan for human use,
(Unless dissentious vanity obstruct it)
Shall steadily remove the ills of life,
And every bar to happiness and virtue;
Till, while we chance to wonder at the change, 945
And then look back upon a barbarous age,
We bless the heavenly cause which could produce it!

*[Exit, following Attendants: the Queen slowly, as
in devout contemplation, enters the cottage.]*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The orders having been executed for filling the arched passage, the prospect is discovered which it concealed before; and while the rest of the background seems shaded by passing clouds, exhibits the stream, after it has reached the valley, serpentine through a variegated country.

Enter CEOLUPH, and Vassal.

Vass. The work that yonder was enjoin'd the Irish,
I see, my lord, is done. That way is barr'd
Against the enemy. 'Tis fortunate 950
They did not fail us.

Ceo. Yet thy words alarm me :
The prisoners must not be entrusted longer
To spirits so inclin'd. Where is the Dane ?

Vass. I saw him late among the queen's attendants,
Who were dismiss'd, disposing them in safety. 955

Ceo. Here will I wait him. Say, meanwhile, if
more

Thy spies inform'd thee of the daring language
These Irish held.

Vass. Some praise the wide renown
And virtues of the king ; some the queen's beauty,
And mourn her own distresses, and her son's. 960
Others lament the oppression of the Danes,
Vowing that almost, to support its ills,
Christian obedience fails. The loyal, too,
They say, can feel, and, in necessity
Behold a plea that sanctifies resistance. 965

Ceo. And shall we trust to such the royal prisoners ?

Vass. Far be it from our thoughts, my honour'd lord.

Ceo. Shall I, for pity of their sufferings, leave them
With Christians, who might pay them much respect,
But would betray their trust ? What is to me 970
Their mild captivity, or soften'd sorrow ?

They would, I doubt not, rather than by foes,
Be guarded by the Irish ; but if such
As are acknowledg'd friends, o'erlook their welfare,
And careless of the caution it enjoins us, 975
Forfeit our confidence, let them be thank'd for't.

Vass. My lord, I own abuse of such indulgence
Well merits punishment.

Ceo. And they shall have it.
Yes, the barbarians will ere long surround them ;
That wanton spirit which, remov'd till now, 980
Has been without an object, shall be seen
In full display : harshness, or insolence,
Pain, or whate'er besides caprice inflicts,
Shall seem a grievous change—

Vass. Softly, my lord ;
For we may hence be heard.—And see, at length,
The Dane approaching, whom we waited here.

Ceo. Go swiftly to my troops : let them attend
Without delay. I will inform the Dane
Of what we purpose, that he be prepar'd
To hasten, with the Irish, from this station, 990
While we, for present safety, take their office.

[*Exit Vassal.*]

SCENE II.

CEOLUPH. *To him, enter* KENRITH.

Ken. I learn, my lord, 'twas thy desire to see me ;
And hence am come.

Ceo. I sought this conference,
'Tis true ; and my intention was to tell thee

We need no longer the attendance, Dane, 995
Of thee, or of the Irish ; will dispense
In future with thy care of this our charge,
And see, that 'tis dispos'd of as shall suit
The common cause.

Ken. I dive not to thy meaning.
Hast thou authority, my lord, to make 1000
This change? Canst thou produce our general's
orders?

Ceo. The authority by which, to guard this spot,
I late conducted thee, I now exert,
Requiring thy departure.

Ken. If, as then,
Thou canst assure me of the chief's consent, 1005
(Whom only I obey) I shall at once
Confess my right now to resign my trust,
And thine as doubtful, to succeed to it.
Till this, it may not be.

Ceo. And dost thou think
The Danes, who, for the welfare of their tribes, 1010
Invited my assistance, will pronounce me
So useless now, and of such small account,
That my exertions for the common cause
Must be prescrib'd by peasants?

Ken. To nought else,
Proud lord, but to the General and his rules, 1015
Did I expect obedience at thy hands.
This contumelious style thou hast assum'd,
Hadst thou but known and weigh'd the esteem I
boast,
Might have appear'd less wise.

Ceo. I see thy purpose ;
'Tis to create delays, and, with this band 1020
Of false auxiliaries, beneath thy orders,
Expect the proper moment of desertion ;
But, ere 'tis long, thy precious charge, rely on't,
Shall be securely plac'd beyond thy power.

Ken. Unmanner'd lord, I will not vie with thee
In base scurrility ; but, be assur'd,
Nor thou, nor any other, with loud words
Can daunt me from my duty : that, I trust,
Of which my honour is the pledge, is safe.

SCENE III.

CEOLUPH, and KENRITH. *To them, enter the Soldiers of
Ceoluph.*

Ceo. 'Tis only known by proof.

Ken. I shrink not from it.

[Ceoluph goes hastily towards the cottage, Kenrith following, who prevents his entrance. A struggle ensues at the door, during which Ceoluph draws his sword and wounds Kenrith. He, being struck, staggers towards the front of the stage, against a tree.]

SCENE IV.

CEOLUPH, KENRITH, and *English Soldiers.* *To them,
enter ELSITHA, and EDMUND running out before her.*

Els. What causes this dispute ? if we, by chance,
Should be the subject of your conference,
Perhaps, by our compliance, we might give
To both content. Alas ! good Dane, thou bleed'st.

SCENE V.

ELSITHA, EDMUND, CEOLUPH, KENRITH, and *English Soldiers.* *To them, enter the Irish as lookers on.*

Ceo. [*seizing Edmund.*] This is my prize.

Els. O spare my child!

[*swoons, and is carried in by some Irish.*]

SCENE VI.

EDMUND, CEOLUPH, and KENRITH; *English Soldiers,*
Irish Soldiers.

Ken. [*advancing.*] Mark, soldiers, 1035
Maim'd as I am, how, in so fair a cause,
I now unsheath this sword, and bid you follow,
To save our honour from this lawless lord!
He, by these insults, on the Danish name
Would cast foul stains, and, our reputed friend, 1040
Would trample on our discipline; but you
Know better, as I trust, the brave man's duty,
Than to see wrested forcibly away
What is confided to us.

Ceo. Shew too, you

SCENE VIII.

EDMUND, and KENRITH.

Ken. Here, young prince, remain,
Where thou art safe, and need'st no longer fear
The sight of strangers. [*Exit.*

SCENE IX.

EDMUND. *To him, enter SIWARD, OSWAY, and Attendants.*

Siw. [*to the Attendants.*] When he joins his troops,
Towards whom he goes, the Dane will soon perceive
A spirit less devoted to his cause
Than he expects. They all resent this insult
On so esteem'd a leader, whose persuasion
Alone preserv'd the Danes their loyalty ;
For so 'tis said. One cannot read their purpose ; 1065
But they aver, that to defend the queen
And prince from harm, their lives are readiest
offerings.

Osw. Then may Lord Ceoluph's return, with proof

Of the Dane's countenance to these his measures,
Be their immediate signal of revolt. 1070

Siw. 'Tis not unlikely ; and we soon may see
Where tend their doubtful murmurs. So, young
prince,

Thou wast involv'd, 'tis said, in a strange scene
Of tumult and confusion, which, I doubt not,
Surpass'd whatever thou had'st known before. 1075

Yet are we glad that, through the aid of Heaven,
We now may give thee joy of the escape.

But how is this ? thou 'lt be a warrior, prince ;
Thou art unterrified.

Edm. [*running towards the harp, and sounding it.*]

O yes.

Siw.

What, prince !

Why dost thou draw thy hand across that harp ? 1080

Edm. Did we not beat them ?

Siw.

Beat them ! yes, you did.

Edm. O, I remember that my father us'd
To play upon his harp the songs of Ossian,
Who went to battle, fought, and, when return'd,
Would sing so nobly of the deeds he saw, 1085
That, after he had done, I ask'd my father

When he would let me have a sword and spear,
And take me with him to the wars. [*to the harper.*

Pray tell me,
Canst thou not sing so too ?

Sir. 'Tis, be assur'd,
What the queen's illness recommends. Yes, raise
Some song of triumph, cheerful in its strains,
While I convey to her, without delay,
The important tidings of congenial sort
Our alter'd state permits. This too were useful.
[*Exit into the cottage.*

SCENE X.

EDMUND, OSWAY, and Attendants.

SONG.

That harp, with Scotland's praise of old 1095
Enchanting, o'er the festive hall,
Where Ossian sate, the amaze of all,
Now Britain's undistinguish'd deeds to unfold,
Wakes sweetly, at the poet's call.

*“ Bless’d be the day,” he sings, “ the auspicious day,
When strong resistance curb’d our foes ;
When, seen conspicuous o’er his vanquish’d clay,
The funeral mound of Hubba rose.*

*“ Ye waves, that lash the lofty shore
Whence his returning squadron flew, 1105
Ye might not Britain’s virtue view
Alone ; but from the grotts of ocean hoar,
Far, far remote, on labour new
Intent, her chief obscur’d in base attire
His warlike limbs, and bore the charms 1110
Of music to the haunt of licence dire,
That fury throng’d with adverse arms.*

*“ Pleas’d at his mirthful mood, and pleas’d
At his soft harp’s bewitching tone,
While he each secret spies unknown, 1115
The warriors cherish the sweet bane, that eas’d
The heart of care ; yet, threat’ning shewn,
Soon shall his myriads move from Selwood’s glade.
Near valour, bursting from the bands
Of faint despondence, with resistless aid 1120
Obedient faith still ready stands.”*



Drawn by Sir R. B. B. B.

Engraved by W. B. B.

(Alfred's Tower, in Selwood Forest.)

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*O realm of ever-living strains,
Thus round thy lakes of Britain sings
Some bard, nor shall the slumbering strings
Pass silently the future wreaths she gains, 1125
Or sway'd by one, or many kings ;
Nor shall her sons of glory want their praise ;
With arms, or counsels, skill'd from wrong
To guard a state, or trace the doubtful ways
Of science, or sustain the song. 1130*

SCENE XI.

EDMUND, OSWAY, and Attendants. *To them, re-enter*
SIWARD.

Osw. How fares the queen ?

Siw. Recover'd from the effect
Of her long trance so lately, she appears
As one insensible to what is said.
Yet have I left the tidings, well assur'd
They quickly will restore her drooping spirits. 1135
Osw. The door is mov'd. Can it denote her
coming ?

SCENE XII.

EDMUND, SIWARD, and Attendants. *To them, enter ELSITHA, very weak, leaning on EDITHA, from the cottage.*

Els. No sooner did I catch the sounds that told
Something of what had pass'd, than straight I flew
To learn it all. Ah ! I perceive 'tis so.
Good folks, I thank you much, if it was you 1140
That sav'd my child.

Sir. Princess, we have besides
A cause of farther joy ; our present hopes—

Els. Talk not to me of hope : that is for others.
Once I, too, hop'd, but long calamity
And frequent disappointment prov'd it vain.— 1145
Alas ! my strength endures not this exertion,
And I am faint. Conduct me, worthy friend,
Back to the cottage.—[*to Edmund.*] Thou canst aid
to raise,
If aught can, from her present feeble state,
Thy mother : come, and cheer me with thy looks.

[*he runs to Elsitha and leans fondly upon her.*]

[*to Editha.*] Support my steps. [*looking on Edmund.*]

Do not stir from me, child.

[*Exeunt Elsitha, Editha, and Edmund into the cottage.*]

SCENE XIII.

SIWARD, OSWAY, and Attendants.

I. *Sold.* [*without.*] Long live King Alfred!

Sir. These are sounds which rate
Our fortune far superior to our hopes.
What may they mean ?

SCENE XIV.

SIWARD, OSWAY, and Attendants. *To them, enter MERVIN,
and Irish Soldiers.*

Sir. Prince, we rejoice to see thee,
However unexpected, join us here. 1155

Merv. Summon'd in Alfred's venerated name,
At length the Irish own their ancient friends,
And have surrender'd to our force the prisoners.
A guard sufficient will, without delay,

Transport you to the place you sought before, 1160
Far from the neighbourhood of war and danger.

Siw. 'Tis fortunate the Dane could not prevent
Their just submission.

Merv. Faithful to his trust,
He long endeavour'd; but the love they bore him
Only avail'd to stipulate such favour 1165
As we were no less forward to allow.
He has his freedom.

Siw. We obey thy orders.

Merv. Then hasten your departure. Go, since now
There is no hindrance.

Siw. [*looking behind the scenes.*] Yet that new
appearance
Which cross'd my sight this moment, scarcely proves
it. 1170

Merv. [*looking the same way.*] Who is the chief
that yonder seems with threats,
With a loud voice, and wild impetuous gestures,
To parley with our troops, ranged farthest off?

Siw. 'Tis Ceoluph, that treacherous lord; who
went
From hence just now, to seek the Danish general,

And authorize undue severity,
By his consent, on those he, raving here,
Entitled rebels. By the fate of war,
He finds them distant, and returns alone
To wreak his vengeance on them. Led by thee,
We shall not fear a trial of our strength.

Merv. No; the adjustment of this difference rests
On us two only. No more blood be spill'd!

Siw. Prince, do not hazard, without need, thy
person,
Nor slight our ready aid.

Merv. I charge you, stay! 1185
[draws his sword, and exit.

SCENE XV.

SIWARD, OSWAY, *Attendants, and Irish Soldiers.*

Siw. The event will be a source of general sorrow
To all the army, should it be perceiv'd,
In this brave prince's death, unfortunate :
His ardent valour, and the abhorrence felt
By clear integrity, at darkest baseness, 1190
Are the resistless prompters of his rage.

O may the vigour which they lend his arm
Command success !

Osw. Thou heard'st their clashing swords ?

Sir. Perhaps from thence thou mayst discover
somewhat

Of this momentous battle.

Osw. Scarce I see them : 1195

The drooping foliage so impedes my view,
And now a rapid impulse carries them
Behind the thickest shade.

Sir. Advance, and mark them.

Osw. [*going, stops.*] That is the prince, most
surely, who appears

With signs of agitation, and directs 1200
Hither his course.

Sir. May it bode good !

SCENE XVI.

SIWARD, OSWAY, *Attendants, and Irish Soldiers.* To
them, enter MERVIN.

Merv. I bring you

The news, that Alfred hither leads in haste
His earnest bands, though as I fear the cause

Is ill success ; whose mournful signs are witness'd
In general flight. Our doubt will shortly cease.

SCENE XVII.

MERVIN, SIWARD, OSWAY, *Attendants, and Irish Soldiers.*

To them, enter ALFRED, and English Soldiers.

Alf. Prince, thus surrounded, as thou art, by foes,
What am I to conclude ? Thou, surely, hast not
Fall'n by the fate of battle in their power ;
But if thou have, my ready arms shall strive
With English valour's aid, to wrest thee from them.

Merv. No, Alfred ; they are friends, not foes, thou
seest,
Who vie with Englishmen in acts of valour.

Alf. Such new society might raise, in some,
A doubt, if thou, prince, art become our foe ;
Or rather those, more fortunately friends, 1215
Who lately warr'd against us. But thy faith
In me prevents it.

Merv. Lo ! a proof of this.

SCENE XVIII.

ALFRED, MERVIN, SIWARD, OSWAY, *Attendants, Irish and English Soldiers.* To them, enter CEOLUPH wounded, brought in by Vassal, and others.

Alf. How shall I praise thee, gallant prince,
enough ?

Yes, 'tis a noble proof—

[*They carry Ceoluph towards the cottage, according to their intention of entering it, and one who precedes is about to open the door.*]

But see, his hand

Rais'd up, as if to warn them he would speak. 1220

Ceo. [*in a despairing voice.*] No ; stir not farther—
set me down—my wound

Asks sudden rest ; and while I yet retain

Life's lessening remnant, anxiously I seek

To put it all to profit.

Vass.

If, my lord,

Thy purpose be to summon to the attack 1225

Our troops, how great soe'er king Alfred's force,

We stand prepar'd—

Ceo. [*in the same tone.*] My purpose was not such :
Let them approach him, but exhibit looks
Of meek submission, not of fierce defiance ;
And to forgiveness of that breach of faith, 1230
Of which I solely was the unworthy cause,
Waken his mercy. Let them too (and say
My counsel is the richest legacy
A chieftain could bequeath them) ever shun
The paths that lead to treason. Senseless hate, 1235
And senseless envy of superior rank,
Be banish'd from their breasts. Let them not think
That gain is happiness, nor, for its gifts,
Hope plunder in rebellion. Let them, too,
Beware of those, who, by the lure of reason, 1240
Would draw them to destruction. Nay, and urge
them
Ev'n to distrust their own self-counsell'd thoughts,
Prompting precarious change.

Vass.

My lord, I will.

Ceo. 'Tis thus my faithful troops may satisfy
Their conscience, and their God—I can no more—
Ev'n now I feel a sudden faintness warn
My end approaches fast, and from my veins

The life-blood issuing with a swifter flow,
Leaves cold these torpid limbs—O injur'd monarch—
Heav'n speed him, and have mercy on my—Oh!

[*dies.*

Alf. 'Tis o'er. Ye vassals of the unhappy lord,
Bear hence the body, and, with decent rites
Let it be honour'd. To yourselves I grant
Free pardon. Go, let his judicious counsel
Sink in your souls, and prove your future guide.

[*Exeunt with the body.*

SCENE XIX.

ALFRED, MERVIN, SIWARD, OSWAY, *Attendants, English
and Irish Soldiers.*

Alf. Thy service, prince, is now again desir'd;
And for the public cause, I would to thee
Entrust a message.

Merv. Readily I take
The office, Alfred, though the unwelcome task
Be to give sanction to disgraceful terms 1260
Of peace, as conquer'd, with the haughty foe.

Alf. Then listen to what terms I grant the Danes:

Pent, as they are, within yon distant castle,
In lessen'd numbers, and with humbler spirit—

Merv. Repeat thy words. What! have we gain'd
the day? 1265

Alf. Yes, never Alfred has beheld, till now,
His power so firmly fix'd, or stretch'd so wide
Over this beauteous isle. The king of Scotland,
The prudent Gregory, for his country's good,
Had wisely sought protection from our own, 1270
And sent his brave auxiliars to the war,
As subject to our sway. Since which event,
Almost the sovereignty of Britain's mine.

Merv. Almost!—'tis quite: I hail thee king of
Britain.

Alf. This cannot be. Thou, for thy state, I know
Dost homage; but thy brother Anarawd,
Who rules the territory of Northern Wales,
Long persever'd to hinder it, and from us
Withheld his aid in the destructive war
The Danes and we have waged; yet 'twere, in truth,
What both our interests alike requir'd.

Merv. Then will they meet no farther opposition.
The Danish fleet, that hover'd round his coast,

Held him in awe, and to this cause is ow'd
The involuntary silence he preserves, 1285
And has regretted long. On thy success,
(Commission'd secretly from him I speak,)
He holds himself from henceforth, and his kingdom
Subjected to thy mild and just dominion.

E. Sold. Long live great Alfred, the first king of
Britain! 1290

Merv. Prepar'd to take thy message, I attend
The instruction of thy tongue. What punishment
Does Alfred mean to award to lawless bands,
Who long have wasted every fertile plain;
And mark'd their steps with blood?

Alf. Such punishment 1295
As Christian justice asks.

Merv. Speak then; what is it?

Alf. Different degrees of favour must be shewn,
To various worth.

Merv. 'Twere worthy Alfred's wisdom.

Alf. Then, since our mild religion teaches us
To love, and to forgive our enemies, 1300
I shall not hesitate. To every Dane
I grant his liberty.

Merv. His liberty ?

Alf. And to all those who will embrace our faith,
And leave their pagan gods, to such I give
Sufficient lands, with honest industry, 1305
Spread through the middle counties of our realm,
To thrive in peace.

Merv. So merciful a conduct,
Was oft thy noble policy ; but now,
While prostrate at thy feet the foe is seen,
And 'tis no longer needful, dost thou hold 1310
The deed is wise ?

Alf. 'Tis just, and therefore wise.

Merv. I swiftly bear these tidings, which will soon
O'ercome their minds with unexpected goodness ;
And, if I augur right, no truer subjects
Their gratitude will leave to upbraid their honour.

[*Exit.*

SCENE XX.

ALFRED, SIWARD, OSWAY, *Attendants, English and Irish*
Soldiers.

Alf. You, men of Ireland, rest protected here,
Awhile our subjects, till the Danish force,

Enfeebled now by this our victory,
 Rouze your brave countrymen to free themselves
 From an oppressive yoke. In after times 1320
 I trust the nations will preserve with care
 Their ancient friendship, and all foreign lands
 Envy the fortune of the British Isles.

I. Sold. Long live great Alfred, patron of the Irish !

E. and I. Sold. May Irishmen and Britons seem
 one people ! 1325

Alf. Our triumph to complete, it yet remains
 That we diffuse the gladness where 'tis due.
 I hasten to the queen : do you meanwhile,
 Resign yourselves to joy, nor let the harp
 Speak of aught else but Britain's future glory. 1330

[*Exit into the cottage.*]

SCENE XXI.

SIWARD, OSWAY, *Attendants, English and Irish Soldiers.*

SONG.

Slow descending from the plains
Of liquid ether, and the peopled sky,
The converse of the bless'd resign'd,
Daughters of peace, th' inventive arts from high

Glance sweet on their remember'd earth. 1335

Floating on colour'd clouds, they seek, inclin'd,

What guardian spirit, whence he reigns,

With beck'ning hand, permitted from above,

And voice exulting, bade them speed,

Round whom himself, and powers aerial love, 1340

(To win the noblest realm decreed)

*Their blessings wide t' extend, and wake their fruits to
birth.*

Heavenly harbingers of joy,

Come, and below, enchanting nearer, smile,

Stor'd with the secret skill ye boast 1345

Or wealth t' improve, or poverty beguile :

Come ; and the trackless desert sow

With autumn's waving pride ; but o'er the coast

Let commerce all her sons employ

T' adorn, with glories of remotest lands, 1350

Wide cities, your stupendous work,

For all things own, with well-instructed hands,

Each others aid, ye grant to lurk

Uprais'd no genuine charm, no labour useless grow.

Not the thought-inspiring stream

Of fam'd Ilyssus, nor the sage's bowers ;

Not Tibur's banks your steps attend ;

*'Twas Britain's Genius, from the bordering flowers
Of limpid Thames that call'd so long*

Your radiant beauty, where in pride ascend 1360

Augusta's towers, and neighbouring gleam ;

*Or verdant paths divide the elms of Shene,
Or forests clothe the winding-shore.*

What splendour then shall raise the vivid scene,

When you refinement's gladness pour, 1365

And virtue wider blooms around th' expecting throng.

Siw. I wonder what the intentions of the king
Are in this weighty matter, which must soon
Engage us, the formation of a state.

All who survive the battle of this day 1370

Expect, I doubt not, here, upon the field,

Some declaration of important kind.

Osw. It must be so ; for, ere the fight began,
'Tis said, he, with the hopes of liberty,

Of new and better laws, to fortify, 1375

And to extend our rights, inspir'd their courage.

What it may be, I guess not ; if we credit
The voice of rumour, he intends to lay
Such privileges down, secur'd by law,
As common virtue scarcely could resign. 1380

Siw. 'Tis safer to distrust those wandering tales ;
He means us good, but we shall see, if now
A youthful monarch at his reign's first outset,
Dare liberate subjects from undue dependence,
And give an earnest of regard to freedom. 1385

SCENE XXII.

SIWARD, OSWAY, *Attendants, English and Irish Soldiers.*
To them, enter ALFRED, ELSITHA ; recovered, but pale,
and EDMUND.

Alf. Soldiers and friends, the toil of battle past,
'Tis now our business elsewhere to seek forth
Some better place of rest ; so long condemn'd
To bear the weather's worst inclemencies,
Or find, at most, in some half ruin'd hovel, 1390
Or hut, a shelter from the raging storm,
Each will be lodg'd beneath his roof again,
And mansions which the Danes have long possess'd

Are open to receive us. There repose
 Will be as just as welcome ; and yet now 1395
 Activity becomes us, and a work
 Of lasting import asks the nation's efforts ;
 Nor shall I shrink from toil, or sacrifice
 Of rights, in this revision of our laws.
 Oft in discourse ye heard of my intentions ; 1400
 What ye were told do I confirm ; and promise
 To make you those concessions : on their base
 (Destin'd, I hope, to be the pride of man)
 The British constitution shall arise,
 And may it last till time shall be no more ! 1405

*[They look on each other in admiration. The
 English, Scots, Welch, and Irish following in
 procession, in their respective arms and dresses,
 Exeunt omnes.]*

NOTES.

Page 56. *Think but of one Rome's sages, &c.*] Cicero's praise of this form of government is known, and Tacitus, though speaking in the style of objection, condemns it only as a fine theory, which had attracted the attention of philosophers, but was impossible to reduce to practice.

Page 61. *When Arthur fill'd the island throne.*] "Arthur, provoked to see the little advantage he had yet gained, and that victory yet continued in suspense, drew out his Caliburn, and calling upon the name of the Blessed Virgin, rushed forward with great violence into the thickest of the enemy's ranks; of whom (such was the merit of his prayers) not one escaped alive that felt the fury of his sword." *Geoffery of Monmouth*.

Page 62. *Chiefs prostrate lie.*] Catalina vero longe a suis, inter hostium cadavera, repertus est, paulum etiam spirans, ferociamque animi, quam habuerat vivus, in vultu retinens. *Sall. Bell. Cat.*

This is still more closely imitated by Rucelai in his *Rosmunda*, in the following lines:—

E morto ritenea quella fierezza
Ch'avea quand'era vivo, e quell'orrore.

Page 62. *For toils like these.*]

Hac arte Pollux, hac vagus Hercules. *Hor.*

Page 63. *Their names alike, (if such be praise.)*

Ossaque nomen

Hesperiâ in magnâ, si qua est ea gloria, signant.

Virg.

Page 101. *Nor shall her sons of glory.*] “Thy sons of glory many.” See Thompson, in his *Summer*; to whose patriotism, displayed in the rest of the paragraph, this fiction of Ossian’s harp alludes.

Page 116. *Winding-shore.*] The ancient name of Windsor.

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